

West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health



NEWS RELEASE

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Three Pacific Coast Governors Announce Historic Partnership for Ocean Action California, Oregon and Washington Will Work Together to Safeguard Critical Marine Resources

LONG BEACH, CALIF.—The Governors of California, Oregon, and Washington today announced an historic partnership and action plan for ocean and coastal resource protection along the Pacific Coast.

The joint effort, to protect the ocean and coast, was announced in Long Beach to more than 1,000 attendees of “California and the World Ocean ’06,” by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was joined by his fellow governors, Oregon’s Ted Kulongoski and Washington’s Chris Gregoire, via live satellite from Portland.

The regional agreement will forge a long-term partnership to tap world-class experts in each state and tackle challenges facing the ocean and coast including:

- Ensuring clean coastal waters and beaches for citizens of the region;
- Protecting and restoring healthy ocean and coastal habitats;
- Promoting effective ecosystem-based management of ocean and coastal resources;
- Reducing adverse impacts from offshore development;
- Expanding ocean and coastal scientific information, research, and monitoring;

- Increasing ocean awareness and literacy among tri-state residents; and
- Fostering sustainable economic development in coastal communities.

“Just as our western states have started to work together to fight global warming and protect our air, we now join forces to make sure we are doing everything in our power to maintain clean water and beaches along our coast,” said Schwarzenegger in making the announcement with his fellow governors.

As he made the announcement, he was flanked by Oregon Gov. Kulongoski and Washington Gov. Gregoire, who appeared on two giant television screens behind him.

"Our oceans provide critical economic, environmental and social benefits to the Pacific Coast states," said Governor Kulongoski. "Today's historic agreement will mean clean water, healthy oceans and a better future for our children."

“Our oceans are home to a great diversity of marine life and clean beaches and oceans are vital to West Coast fishing communities, recreation and tourism,” said Governor Gregoire. “We know that isolated local efforts cannot adequately address the breadth of degradation to our oceans. By cooperating, our three states will combine our resources and influence to make a real difference in the fight to clean and protect the oceans.”

The governors said they expect to announce initial recommendations and initiatives for regional action by early 2007.

Under the collaborative agreement, the three states intend to work together to:

1. Create mechanisms for sharing lessons learned from local, urban, county, and statewide conservation and restoration programs.
2. Expand cooperative scientific and educational efforts on issues of regional significance.
3. Coordinate management strategies and approaches for coastal and marine resources of regional significance.

4. Engage Congress and the White House on regional ocean and coastal issues that are of national significance, such as offshore oil and gas drilling.

The governors recognized that Washington, Oregon, and California “share a rich and diverse bounty of ocean and coastal resources that provide enormous economic, environmental, and social benefits for our states. Yet our citizens’ continued use and enjoyment of coastal and ocean resources is at risk.”

“Polluted waters, declining populations of fish and other marine life, degraded nearshore habitats, risks of severe storms and tsunamis and climate disruption are but a few examples of serious threats to the continued vitality of our ocean-dependent states,” the agreement states.

These are also issues called out in recent years by two national ocean commissions, both of which have called for immediate, meaningful action at all levels to restore and maintain the health of the oceans.

Each of the three states has developed world class expertise in ocean sciences and academics, and established a track record of innovation and leadership on ocean and coastal issues domestically and internationally, the tri-state agreement notes.

“Our growing understanding of our relationship with the marine environment and its living and nonliving natural resources is leading us to explore ecosystem-based approaches to managing our coasts and oceans,” according to the agreement.

Examples of state leadership on these issues include Washington’s Puget Sound Partnership and Ocean Policy Working Group, Oregon’s Ocean Policy Advisory Council, and California’s Ocean Protection Council – all forums for important discussions about ocean issues.

The governors have directed their respective agencies and staffs to work throughout this fall with representatives of business, environmental, governmental, educational, and academic communities to develop recommendations for this historic regional partnership.